

Strategy – Protecting North Carolina’s On and Off Ramps and Primary Route Shoulders (No Parking – Emergency Maneuvers ONLY)

With the ever increasing volumes of a increasingly diverse operator and vehicle fleet populations attempting to meet just in time manufacturing and lifestyle demands, an alarming trend of devastating roadside crashes has been observed along the shoulders and on and off ramps of what should be our safest highways. High Speed vehicles striking parked or slow moving vehicles result in devastating and tragic outcomes. While the argument has often been over simplified and misrepresented as “would you rather me be driving tired on the freeway?” or “stopped on an on ramp getting some rest?” – in reality the choices and the correct answer introduce a none of the above response. From a fundamental highway safety and traffic operations perspective the non-emergency stopping and mis-use of shoulders and ramps is a life endangering decision for not only the operator and passengers of the stopped vehicle but also for any vehicles approaching the roadside fixed object. .

This Strategy is aimed at Reclaiming and Protecting North Carolina’s Interchange On and Off Ramps and Ramp and Mainline Shoulders for emergency maneuvers and not for convenience, rest stops, delivery complications, on route warehousing, or personal matters.

General Description

Technical Attributes

Target	Reducing fatal and injury crashes caused by vehicles parking along the freeway ramps and shoulders. In addition to direct and significant safety concerns (for occupants of stopped vehicles, first responders, and approaching vehicles), this strategy also affords the opportunity to improve sight distances, reduce unnecessary deterioration and damage of ramp shoulders and associated signage and delineation, maximize acceleration and deceleration lengths, improve clear roadside recovery areas, reduce environmental (biological & petroleum based) compromises, preserve scenic vistas, and reduce situations that can introduce significant potential for national security breaches.
Expected Effectiveness	On North Carolina’s Freeway’s alone, it is anticipated that a more aggressive safe ramps and shoulders initiative could result in the saving of 10 lives per years and approximately 100 injuries.
Keys to Success	Zero Tolerance, Zero Plead Downs, and Zero Deaths from illegally parked vehicles on State rights of way and non emergency stopping on highway shoulders. Improved education of motorists, field transportation staff, operators, enforcement, towing, local agencies, and traveling public.
Potential Difficulties	Breaking long established and tolerated patterns of non-compliance and looking the other way. Reaching the increasingly large group of independent and secondary carriers and operators (those typically not associated with the North Carolina Trucking Association).
Appropriate Measures and Data	Crashes involving stationary vehicles on acceleration and deceleration ramps, and shoulders. Improved condition of highway shoulders and roadside areas. Improved sight distance and acceleration and deceleration lengths for interchange transitional areas.
Associated Needs	More aggressive tow away thresholds may introduce more dialog on liability and more aggressive enforcement will likely introduce adjudication complacency for this issue.

Surveillance and monitoring capabilities and improved reporting mechanisms would be required. Due to the number of partner agencies involved in this effort – it is critical that a high level of coordinated communication be utilized to effectively reduce the mis-use of North Carolina’s highway shoulders and rights of way.

Consider use of active video surveillance at chronic to supplement enforcement – especially through TMC facilities.

Organizational,
Institutional, and Policy
Issues

Significant – but largely involve the re-energizing, re-educating, and enforcement and more effective and diligent application of existing regulations and policies.

Issues Affecting
Implementation Time

A piecemeal or lackadaisical approach with poor consistency between Counties would greatly inhibit effective implementation. A unified top down mandate would be required.

Costs

TBD – primarily re-emphasizing and actively applying regulations and policies that are in place but largely ignored or under prioritized.

Training

Due to the complacent approach that has evolved with the protection of our shoulders and rights of way, a significant re-learning and updated broadcast of emergency role of shoulders and risks of casual misuse of ramp and mainline shoulders would be required. Improvements in media releases, driver materials, education efforts, and electronic (web based) and printed materials would be necessary and beneficial. A strong companion enforcement, incident management, and judicial outreach training and monitoring component would be necessary to fulfill the intent of this potentially life saving strategy.

Legislative Needs

TBD – however expected to be minimal and of the order of technical corrections or minor amendments to existing legislation and administrative rules.

Illegal R/W Stopping and Parking is Heavily enforced for CMV in VA particularly on I 81. Drivers are CONSISTENTLY cited and thereby highly educated regarding the issue of illegal or improper parking. This program IS working effectively in Virginia. It can be applied as failure to obey a sign or illegal stopping as noted.

NC needs to take similar action with a fine amount applied and not revocable with maybe a \$100 minimum.

Reference Web Page: www.leg.state.va.us

Statutes 46.2 -0830.1 and 46.2 .888 apply to this